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not quite obsolete. Only such a vigorous personality as Dr. Strong's can galvanize them into semblance to living forms of thought. What a steady power he would be in guiding a modern reconstruction of theology! For that reconstruction is surely coming; and this volume aids us very little in attaining a satisfying point of view or in mastering principles that will be both congenial and authoritative for the thinking of the age that has dawned.

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RECENT BOOKS ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS

In view of the fact that our modern ethical problems are being considered and formulated with new definiteness by psychology and social science today, one turns to a book bearing the title *The Christian Method of Ethics* with interest not unmixed with apprehension.¹ Is there a distinctly *Christian* method in ethical science? And if so, will it commend itself to an age which demands thorough and critical examination of all problems? Mr. Clarke recognizes that the Christian is often quite as much bewildered as anyone else as to his duty. But he insists that this bewilderment ought to be eliminated by religious discipline rather than by a non-religious study of life. "The fundamental reason for lack of equipment on the ethical side lies in the fact that the Christian's ethical program is not sought for in the right way. The ethical or practical side of the Christian's life is looked upon as a thing detached; and it is not perceived that Christian practical ideals are rightly formulated only when they are translations into practical life of the one religious ideal" (p. 16). Mr. Clarke's method thus consists in expounding and applying the Christian mysticism which he had previously set forth in his *Philosophy of Christian Experience*.² The Christian is to be so completely in communion with the divine Spirit that he no longer makes human judgments but attains "the supplanting of man's activity by God's own, and thus provides for that automatic adoption of right courses wherein the ultimate ethical attainment consists" (p. 79). "Conscience, for the distinctively Christian man, must be taken as a monitor declaring that not he, but the divine life within him, is to make the choice." One is tempted to ask whether automatic activity due to alien control can be moral at all. To be sure, the situation is saved by the fact which the author regretfully admits, that practically no one is able thus to eliminate his own judgment. One is compelled repeatedly to make

¹ *The Christian Method of Ethics*. By Henry W. Clarke. New York and Chicago: Revell, 1908. 254 pages. \$1.25.

² Reviewed in the *American Journal of Theology*, XI, 359.

the attempt to "call up the living presence of the living Christ, and submit himself to its spell." There is thus left abundant room for personal choice and effort.

But when the author assumes that this type of mystic contemplation is sufficient to solve all problems, we must protest in the name of both Christianity and science. It is dangerous doctrine in these days of specialized knowledge to declare that "as a matter of fact, a perfect spiritual adjustment of man's nature—a perfect ordering of life on its religious side—would, were it accomplished, make any study of practical problems unnecessary" (p. 22). It can be said only of a strangely detached and self-satisfied type of religious experience that "just as it involves freedom from all struggle within, it involves also freedom from all ignorance and perplexity concerning right relations with that which is without" (p. 32). Such language, under the guise of religious devotion serves only to encourage the Christian in what is perhaps his greatest sin today, viz., lack of sensitiveness to the social problem, with its bewildering *human* elements. We are fast being initiated into a method of ethics which consists in bringing to bear upon our problems all the specialized skill of human science, in order to see where the remedy may be found. To fail to co-operate with this scientific ethical endeavor means to be rightly left behind and ignored by the age. Attractive as is Mr. Clarke's exposition of his religious ideal, his book, if followed, would only intensify the moral inefficiency of a pietistic Christianity which has no appreciation of the importance of scientific methods and achievements in dealing with ethical issues. It is peculiarly unfortunate to call this *the* "Christian method" of ethics.

Dr. J. Clark Murray has long been known by his careful work in psychology and general ethics. His treatise on Christian Ethics³ will be welcomed by those who have drawn inspiration from his previous works. It would be impossible for him not to write in a suggestive and interesting style; and in a field where one usually finds either formalism or mere preaching his sane, illuminating consideration of the subject is most wholesome.

But the book belongs distinctly among these philosophical textbooks embodying a method which seems to the modern scholar to make too little use of historical processes. Ethics is defined as a "normative" science in somewhat sharp contrast to the descriptive sciences. The task of Christian ethics is declared to be "to construct a science of the moral life in accordance with the ideal of Christ." In form, therefore, the author would seek to lead us into the art of a rational guidance of life on the basis of a previously

³ *A Handbook of Christian Ethics*. By J. Clark Murray. Edinburgh: Clark; New York: Scribner, 1908. xiv + 328 pages. \$2.25.

ascertained philosophy. One who is familiar with the genetic method of analyzing moral situations will wonder what concrete results can come from a treatise the first chapter of which bears the title, "The Christian Ideal in the Abstract." Starting with the abstract ideal of Christian love, the subsequent chapters bring this to bear on the various problems of life. While Dr. Murray is entirely hospitable toward critical biblical scholarship, he nevertheless assumes an essentially static view of Christianity, and reads his New Testament without due consideration of historical conditions. In this way he escapes the necessity for discussing the serious problem whether an ethical ideal which was dominated by the Messianism and eschatology of primitive Christianity can take a commanding place in our modern world.

Having defined Christian ethics in the above formal manner, it is a comparatively easy task to apply the ideal of Christian love to the varied activities of human life. Incidentally, mention should be made of the admirable way in which—more through psychological insight, it is true, than through an application of historical Christian norms—the author, examines and criticizes current ecclesiastical conceptions of original sin, conversion, repentance, and the like. The physiological conditions of moral life receive unusually excellent treatment. The moral control of emotion, the moral attitude toward pain, the moral significance of optimism, and other aspects of personal life are touched upon in a way which indicates psychological mastery of the problems. The Christian's relations to society are treated under the traditional rubrics of the church, the family, and the state. There is little appreciation here of the genetic problems involved in these forms of social life; but the exposition is most wholesome from the individualistic point of view. The concluding chapter on "The Methodology of Christian Ethics" is an admirable embodiment of pedagogical wisdom which might with profit be circulated separately as a guide to teachers of morals. While the work fails to do justice to many problems growing out of a genetic study of morality, it is an unusually excellent discussion of the subject from the point of view with which most clergyman are familiar, and is especially valuable because it expounds morals in terms of defensible psychology.

Häring's popular discussion of Christian Ethics appeared in German in 1902⁴ and has now been translated into English as a volume in the "Theological Translation Library."⁵ The book is well adapted to introduce

⁴ Reviewed in the *American Journal of Theology*, VIII, 415.

⁵ *The Ethics of the Christian Life*. By Dr. Theodor von Häring. Translated from the second German edition by James S. Hill. With an Introduction by Rev. W. D. Morrison. New York: Putnam; London: Williams and Norgate, 1909. xvi+479 pages.

Christians, who still think in terms of the older metaphysics, to the real problems of morality in our modern life. Along with this type of moral philosophy the author gives an exegesis of New Testament teachings to furnish guidance for our moral conduct today. The interpretation of New Testament precepts is most suggestive from the homiletic point of view and often reveals rare moral insight. The modern New Testament scholar, however, will be impressed by the lack of definite historical method in this exegesis. The statements of the New Testament are as a rule taken as isolated texts containing formulations of ethical principles as such. The consequences of these principles are then deduced and applied to the problem in hand. The author's philosophical attitude is quite in harmony with this treatment of the New Testament. While recognizing certain defects in Kant's exposition of ethics, yet he is decidedly opposed to the empirical method, and insists in retaining an a-priori starting-point as the only way of preserving ethical distinctions. The sense of "ought" is a mysterious endowment furnishing the real kernel of any moral judgment. So emphatically is this a-priori origin of ethics defended that the reader is put face to face with the dilemma of defending this against empiricism or else of abandoning all hope of maintaining the validity of ethical distinctions. It goes without saying that freedom is expounded and defended on the basis of a metaphysical individualism, that a demonstrated logical relationship between ethical concepts is felt to be a sufficient proof of validity, and that the content of ethics must be manipulated so as to be reduced to a philosophical unity which again is adduced as proof of the self-consistency and superiority of the Christian ideal. We may add that the book labors under the disadvantage which is almost inevitable in a translation from the German, in that it employs a style and a vocabulary somewhat unfamiliar to English readers. Thus while the volume is full of wholesome suggestions on various ethical problems, and while it may be used with advantage and profit by those whose thinking is still dominated by the deductive method, it will seem to the student of empirical social ethics today like a survival of an outgrown method in the history of ethical science.

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THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION IN HUMAN LIFE

Professor Foster's book¹ is not, as its name might imply, merely a discussion of the nature and place of religion from the functional and evolutionary

¹ *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence*. By George Burman Foster. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909. xii + 293 pages. \$1.00 net.